

June 4, 2009

*Legislation Would Authorize \$5 Million Annually to LANL, \$35 Million to Research Parks Nationally*

Washington, DC – Today, Rep. Ben Ray Luján introduced legislation that will promote environmental science programs at Los Alamos National Laboratory by authorizing funding for its National Environmental Research Park (NERP) as well as for six other NERPs throughout the country. The research conducted at the research parks produces valuable data that can be used to fight climate change and clean up contaminated sites.

“These parks are unique outdoor laboratories that offer secure settings for long-term research on a broad range of subjects, including wildlife biology, ecology, climate change effects, and maintenance of freshwater ecosystems,” said Rep. Luján. “The parks also provide rich environments for training future researchers and introducing the public to environmental sciences.”

In the mid-1970s, the Department of Energy developed a policy for current and future research parks. The mission of the parks is to: conduct research and education activities to assess and document environmental effects associated with energy and weapons use; explore methods for eliminating or minimizing adverse effects of energy development and nuclear materials on the environment; train students in ecological and environmental sciences; and educate the public. The Parks maintain several long-term data sets on ecology that are available nowhere else in the world. These data sets are uniquely valuable for understanding wildlife biology, ecology, and for the detection of long-term shifts in climate.

In 1972, AEC established the first NERP at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina. The plan for a research park emerged during a formal review of the environmental research activities at Savannah River. The review team consisted of scientists, representatives from other Federal agencies, and members of the newly formed President's Council on Environmental Quality.

The Los Alamos NERP was designated at in 1973. Its 40 square miles include the entire site of Los Alamos National Laboratory and a landscape of canyons, mesas, mountains, and the Rio Grande, providing a diverse range of ecosystems to explore. The Los Alamos Research Park's

ongoing environmental studies include: interaction between its local ecosystems and the hydrologic cycle; contaminant transport; landfill cap performance; woodland productivity; and long-term data sets developed to monitor climate change effects, soil moisture, and fire ecology providing valuable baseline reference information. Notably, over 125 publications related to the interaction between lab operations and the environment have been written about Los Alamos and the Pajarito Plateau it rests on.

“For decades, the National Environmental Research Parks have been conducting critical research for our nation and the world’s environmental research portfolio,” said Rep. Luján. “They are one of our nation’s most valuable environmental research assets, and it is time for them to be recognized in law and explicitly provided the resources they need to continue their valuable work. This legislation offers guidance for the Parks’ research and monitoring programs as well as their education and outreach activities, and it authorizes core funding needed to support their important work.”

Rep. Luján’s legislation authorizes \$5,000,000 for each National Environmental Research Parks for each of the fiscal years 2010 through 2014. The legislation will be referred to the Committee on Science and Technology.

For more information about the Department of Energy’s National Energy Research Parks, visit <http://www.nerp.rnl.gov/>

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For more information about the Los Alamos National Environmental Research Park, visit [http://www.lanl.gov/orgs/tt/partnering/user\\_facility/facilities/environ\\_research.shtml](http://www.lanl.gov/orgs/tt/partnering/user_facility/facilities/environ_research.shtml)

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